

UN STORIA DI ARUBA DI ANTES

By Nydia Ecury

SI BO NO conoce Pedro Pers anto bo no conoce Nort, pasobra Pedro Pers y Nort ta un. Nos por yamé e homber di mas conocí di e pueblo, cu antes tabata centro principal di nos isla. Y Pedro a yudé progresá den tur loque e tabata por.

Carlos Martin Pers y su señora Maria Elizabeth tabatin diez jioe y Pedro Crisólogo, naci dia 5 di December di 1873 tabata un di e mayornan. El a yega te di cinco klas, ora cu el a hayé forza di kita school pa via cu su tata a muri, y tabata su deber di yuda su mama cu esnan mas chikito.

Pedro a cumenzá traha pues na edad di 13 anja, yudando plantadornan cu tur sorto di trabao. El a traha duro casi tres anja largo y e ora su ta-wela a manda buské pe bai Corsouw. Cu e barco "Stella" Pedro a bai cerca mayornan di su mama, kendenan tabata biba na Hato. Pedro ta bisa cu el a pasa nueve luna masha contento aya, subi cerronan di Hato, haci cos di baldadi. Esey tabata único biha cu Pedro a sali for di Aruba.

Ora cu el a bolbe el a bira koster di Misa di Santa Ana di Nort na edad di 16 anja. Pedro tabata único yudador y e mester a haci tur sorto di trabao pa tene Misa na orde. Tabatin mester di un klok pa yama hendenan bin misa y Pastoor a cumenzá pasa colectá di cas pa cas. Pedro a bisa: "Ora cu Pastoor camna den solo e tabata keda corrá mescos cu un pargo. E no tabata costumá cu calor, solamente cu frioe di Holanda. Nos tabatin miedo cu lo e cai malo y cu nos lo keda sin pastoor. E ora mi a bin ofree pa mi haci colect den pueblo; mi a bai masha lugar, for di Westpunt te Paradera; tabata hopi trabao, pero e recompensa tabata e bunita klok, cu yama "Cristo Rey".

Despues Pedro a bira voorlezer y e tabata gana dos fuerte cada bez. E tempo tabata cu cabai, pero e cabai tabata masha mal bestia. Tin biha e tabata yega mei-mei di rooi y e no ke sigui mas y Pedro mester pasa den awa, muha tur su paña, despues di a corre den solo oran largo. "Ta p'esey mi mester a sinti maleza tempran asina" Pedro ta bisa.

Na tur bruid Pedro tabata dirigidor; si e no tabata ey cos no tabata bai na orde ni na smaak. Ora di morto tambe Pedro ta promé cu nan ta yama pa traha cu morto. "Mi no tabatin temor pa traha cu morto", Pedro ta bisa, "mi tabatin ánimo. Y cuanto angelito mi'n carga riba mi schouder, cu suavidad y cariño; tin hende cu ta traha bruto cu e pobercitonan; angelitonan mester worde tratá cu delicadeza".

Di loque Pedro a spaar el a bin traha un cas un 35 anja pasá y ainda e ta biba ey, un tiki p'abao di misa. Promé e cas tabata chikito, pero e mes anja yobida grandi a distribí cu cas di un ruman muher cu tabatin jioe chikito y mester a carganan trece na cas di Pedro y mester a haci e cas mas grandi pa nan a keda ey algun tempo.

Tres ruman homber a bai Cuba ya ta 35 anja y nunca no a tende di nan. Pedro ta bisa cu podiser nan ta na bida ainda, pasobra nunca no a haya noticia di nan morto. Di e otro sietenan solamente Pedro y tres ruman muher ta na bida ainda, esta Zoraida, Maria y Lina.

Un di e pastooran di antes kera busca un trabao na Hospital di Playa pa Pedro pa e yuda soernan cu hombernan, paso-

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IF YOU DON'T know Pedro Pers, you don't know Noord, for Pedro Pers and Noord are one. He can be called the best-known man of the place that once was the most important center of the island. And Pedro Pers has helped in its progress in many ways.

Carlos Martin Pers and his wife Maria Elizabeth had ten children, and Pedro Crisólogo, born on December 5, 1873, was one of the oldest. He had reached the fifth grade when he was forced to quit school at the age of 13 and try to earn some money as his father died and it was his duty to help his mother raise the younger ones. He then helped people who worked the land; he worked very hard and after three years his grandparents, who lived in Curaçao, thought he could use a vacation and they asked him over. He boarded the schooner "Stella" and spent nine months in Curaçao, mostly running around the hills and caves at Hato, where his grandparents lived. That was the only time he ever left Aruba and it was also the only chance he had to be a carefree boy.

When he came back to Aruba he was made sextant of the St. Ana Church at Noord, at the age of 16. Pedro



was the only helper and had to do all kinds of jobs to keep the church neat. Then the church needed a bell to call the worshippers and the priest started going around for funds. Pedro says: "After walking in the sun he looked just like a red snapper. He was accustomed to the cold of Holland, and not at all to our climate. We feared he might get sick, so I offered to go around and do the collecting; I went many places, from Westpunt all the way down to Paradera; it was tiresome, but the reward was our bell, which was christened "Cristo Rey".

Later on Pedro was made undertaker too, which job included the extending of invitations to friends and relations to attend a funeral; with this he earned two dollars each time. He used to go on horseback, but the horse was very obstinate; sometimes they'd get in the middle of a stream (after heavy rainfall) and the horse just wouldn't move any farther. Pedro often had to wade knee-deep through the cold water, after riding in the hot sun for hours at a stretch. "No wonder I got to be ailing at an early age", he says. At weddings also Pedro officiated as master of ceremonies; he had to be present or things just wouldn't go right. When someone died Pedro had to be summoned to fix up the corpse. "I had no fear to work with the dead", he says, "I had animo. And the little angels (dead children are called "angelitos" in Aruba) I have often carried on my shoulder, with gentleness; I hated the way other people handled the poor little ones, holding them roughly in any old way, with no delicacy. 'Angels' have to be handled with gentleness."

Out of savings Pedro built his own home about 35 years ago and he still lives there at about a five minute's walk from the church. It was just two rooms in the beginning, but the same year a great rainfall ruined the house of a sister who had a new-born baby and they had to be brought to Pedro's house to live, and the house was enlarged to accommodate his sister's family too. Later on they moved away and Pedro stayed by himself again.

Three of his brothers went to Cuba

about 35 years ago and have not been heard of since. "I guess they must still be alive", Pedro says, "or we would have had news of their death". Of the remainder only Pedro and three sisters, Zoraida, Maria and Lina are still alive.

One of the priests of long ago was going to get Pedro a job at the San Pedro Hospital in Oranjestad as a male nurse, as everyone could see that Pedro had a way with suffering people, but the priest died and nothing came of it.

Six years ago, when the war in Holland started, Pedro's ailment started too, and he has never quite recovered. He doesn't feel very strong and has to be taken care of by his sister Lina.

It seems that Pedro never got much recognition for all the work he has done in his community, beyond the honor of doing a good civic job. However, people are undemonstrative and often forgetful, and no doubt Pedro's people regard him highly.

He doesn't feel bitter about his lack of rewards, just shrugs his shoulders and says: "God will pay me, and if God doesn't pay me I can't help it. I have done much good, but maybe I've done bad too, I don't know, and maybe in weighing the two against each other there's nothing left to my credit." Pedro is a man of great faith.

He deserves many more years to live as an example of one who cares for his fellowmen.

John Walther of S.O.D., who was in the Drafting Dept. here from 1934 to 1937, died in New Jersey September 8 at the age of 48. He had over 25 years Company service. He is survived by his wife and three children.